



United States  
Environmental Protection  
Agency

## Vermiculite Products Site

Harris County  
Houston, Texas

September 2014

### This Fact Sheet will tell you about...

- Current Status
- Background Information
- Potential Threats to Public Health and Welfare
- What to Expect
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### Current Status

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is conducting soil assessment activities at the Vermiculite Products Site (Site). The Site is the location of a vermiculite processing facility. The vermiculite processed at this facility was mined from the Zonolite Mine in Libby, Montana, and was found to be contaminated with asbestos. Asbestos in outdoor soil or other source material is not inherently hazardous, unless the asbestos is released from the source material into the air where it can be inhaled.

As part of its assessment activities, the EPA has been looking at nearby locations where asbestos may have moved, either through air deposition or through use as fill. The community close to the Site is undergoing rapid residential redevelopment, so the EPA prioritized the sampling of these locations due to the potential for soil disturbing activities associated with redevelopment. The EPA has already addressed actionable soil contamination at one property slated for redevelopment.

The EPA has completed sampling activities onsite and at some targeted offsite locations. Some actionable levels of asbestos soil contamination have been identified both onsite and offsite. The EPA plans to continue assessment activities in several additional locations offsite. Assessment activities include soil sampling and air activity based sampling (ABS). ABS mimics typical human soil disturbing activities, such as gardening or child's play, to determine the potential for release of asbestos from the soil.

### Background Information

As part of a national re-evaluation of facilities that received vermiculite ore from the Zonolite Mine owned by W. R. Grace, in Libby, Montana, the EPA initiated a removal assessment at the Site. The Site, in operation since 1941, is an active vermiculite exfoliation facility that processes vermiculite used in concrete aggregate. According to W. R. Grace shipping invoices, 213,750 tons of raw vermiculite ore from the Zonolite Mine were shipped to the facility between 1967 and 1986.

The Vermiculite Products facility is located at 3025 Maxroy Street in Houston, Harris County, Texas. There is an existing residential area west of the Site consisting of newly redeveloped residential homes and some older housing stock. This area and several nearby former commercial properties are being redeveloped with residential homes.

### Potential Threats to Public Health and Welfare

Asbestos is of potential concern because chronic inhalation exposure to excessive levels of asbestos fibers suspended in air can result in lung diseases such as asbestosis, mesothelioma, and lung cancer. The route of exposure that represents the greatest concern to human health is the inhalation of air-borne fibers, dispersed from soil by the action of wind and pedestrian or vehicular traffic.

### What to Expect

The EPA will complete its comprehensive sampling plan in the community to identify any potential threat to human health from asbestos-contaminated soil. The EPA plans to initiate discussions with the potentially responsible parties to address the contamination identified in association with the site.



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## For More Information

If you would like more information about the Site, contact:

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*All inquiries from the news media should be directed to the EPA Region 6 Press Office at 214.665.2200.*

To receive a Spanish translation of this fact sheet call U.S. EPA at 1.800.533.3508 (toll-free).

Para recibir una traducción en español de esta hoja de datos, comuníquese con la Agencia de Protección del Medio Ambiente de los EEUU (la EPA) al número de teléfono 1.800.533.3508 (llamada gratis).



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